

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-43. (Cancelled)

44. (Currently Amended) A method for selectively accepting an electronic message having a sender address, the method comprising establishing a test connection to an authorized ~~mailhost~~ server for the sender address in accordance with Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), sending a SMTP RCPT ~~recipient~~ command specifying the sender address to the authorized ~~server~~ mailhost, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the SMTP RCPT command ~~mailhost indicates that the sender address does not exist at the authorized mailhost.~~

45. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 44, further comprising accepting the electronic message if the authorized ~~server~~ mailhost affirmatively accepts the SMTP RCPT ~~recipient~~ command.

46. (canceled)

47-48. (withdrawn – canceled)

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49. (withdrawn – currently amended) The method of claim 44, wherein the authorized ~~server~~mailhost is a mail exchanger host for the domain of the e-mail address.

50. (withdrawn - currently amended) The method of claim 44, wherein the ~~at least one~~ authorized ~~server~~mailhost has the same name as the domain of the sender address.

51. (withdrawn - canceled)

52-53. (canceled)

54-57. (withdrawn - canceled)

58. (currently amended) A system for selectively accepting an electronic message having a sender address, the system comprising a filter establishing a test connection to an authorized ~~mailhost~~server for the sender address in accordance with Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), sending a SMTP RCPT ~~recipient~~ command specifying the sender address to the authorized ~~mailhost~~server, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized ~~mailhost~~ server does not affirmatively accept the SMTP RCPT command~~indicates that the sender address does not exist at the authorized mailhost.~~

59. (currently amended) The system of claim 58, further comprising accepting the electronic message if the authorized ~~mailhost~~server affirmatively accepts the SMTP RCPT~~recipient~~ command.

60-62. (canceled)

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63-72. (withdrawn - canceled)

73. (currently amended) An article of manufacture for selectively accepting an electronic message having a sender address, the article of manufacture comprising a computer-readable medium having stored thereon instructions which, when performed by a processor, cause the processor to execute the steps comprising the steps of: establishing a test connection to an authorized ~~mailhost~~server for the sender address in accordance with Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), sending a SMTP RCPT ~~recipient~~ command specifying the sender address to the authorized ~~mailhost~~server, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized ~~mailhost~~ indicates that the sender address does not exist at the authorized mailhostserver does not affirmatively accept the SMTP RCPT command.

74. (currently amended) The article of manufacture of claim 73, further comprising accepting the electronic message if the authorized ~~mailhost~~server affirmatively accepts the ~~recipient~~ SMTP RCPT command.

75-77. (canceled)

78-85. (withdrawn - canceled)

86. (canceled)

87. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~86~~44, further comprising sending a SMTP MAIL command to the authorized server, the a-SMTP MAIL command specifying a complete e-mail address.

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88. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~86~~44, further comprising sending a SMTP MAIL command to the authorized server, the SMTP MAIL command specifying the null address “◇”.

89. (canceled)

90. (currently amended) The method of claim 45~~86~~, further comprising sending wherein ~~said determination is made based upon the authorized mailhost's numeric response to a SMTP~~ DATA command to the authorized server and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the SMTP DATA command.

91-96. (withdrawn - canceled)

97. (new) The method of claim 45, further comprising sending message data to the authorized server, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the message data.

98. (new) A method for selectively accepting an electronic message having a sender address, the method comprising establishing a test connection to an authorized server for the sender address, sending to the authorized server a recipient command as defined by a protocol to identify an individual electronic message recipient, the recipient command specifying the sender address as the individual recipient, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the recipient command.

99. (new) The method of claim 98, further comprising accepting the electronic message if the authorized server affirmatively accepts the recipient command.

100. (new) The method of claim 99, wherein the recipient command does not use any command provided explicitly for the purpose of verifying a user address, such as the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) VRFY command.

101. (new) A system for selectively accepting an electronic message having a sender address, the system comprising a filter establishing a test connection to an authorized server for the sender address, sending to the authorized server a recipient command as defined by a protocol to identify an individual electronic message recipient, the recipient command specifying the sender address as the individual recipient, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the recipient command.

102. (new) The system of claim 101, further comprising accepting the electronic message if the authorized server affirmatively accepts the recipient command.

103. (new) The system of claim 101, wherein the recipient command does not use any command provided explicitly for the purpose of verifying a user address, such as the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) VRFY command.

104. (withdrawn – new) The system of claim 58, wherein the authorized server is a mail exchanger host for the domain of the e-mail address.

105. (withdrawn - new) The system of claim 58, wherein the authorized server has the same name as the domain of the sender address.

106. (new) An article of manufacture for selectively accepting an electronic message having a sender address, the article of manufacture comprising a computer-readable medium having stored thereon instructions which, when performed by a processor, cause the processor to execute the steps comprising the steps of: establishing a test connection to an authorized server for the sender address, sending to the authorized server a recipient command as defined by a protocol to identify an individual electronic message recipient, the recipient command specifying the sender address as the individual recipient, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the recipient command.

107. (new) The article of manufacture of claim 106, further comprising accepting the electronic message if the authorized server affirmatively accepts the recipient command.

108. (new) The system of claim 58, further comprising sending a SMTP MAIL command to the authorized server, the SMTP MAIL command specifying a complete e-mail address.

109. (new) The article of manufacture of claim 106, wherein the recipient command does not use any command provided explicitly for the purpose of verifying a user address, such as the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) VRFY command.

110. (withdrawn – new) The article of manufacture of claim 73, wherein the authorized server is a mail exchanger host for the domain of the e-mail address.

111. (withdrawn - new) The article of manufacture of claim 73, wherein the authorized server has the same name as the domain of the sender address.

112. (new) The article of claim 73, further comprising sending a SMTP MAIL command to the authorized server, the SMTP MAIL command specifying a complete e-mail address.

113. (new) The article of claim 73, further comprising sending a SMTP MAIL command to the authorized server, the SMTP MAIL command specifying the null address “◇”.

114. (new) The article of claim 74, further comprising sending a SMTP DATA command to the authorized server and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the SMTP DATA command.

115. (new) The article of claim 74, further comprising sending message data to the authorized server, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the message data.

116. (new) The system of claim 58, further comprising sending a SMTP MAIL command to the authorized server, the SMTP MAIL command specifying the null address “◇”.

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117. (new) The system of claim 59, further comprising sending a SMTP DATA command to the authorized server and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the SMTP DATA command.

118. (new) The system of claim 59, further comprising sending message data to the authorized server, and rejecting the electronic message if the authorized server does not affirmatively accept the message data.